



Utah Valley Hospital in 1939



Utah Valley Hospital today



John H. Zenger, Administrator

THE MEDICAL-HOSPITAL SCENE IN UTAH COUNTY PRIOR TO 1939

Despite the fact that Utah County is the third largest county in Utah, as late as 1935 there was not what could be considered a modern hospital in the county. In Provo, from about 1915 to 1939, there was only the Aird Hospital, a converted residence, with 8 beds, owned and operated by Dr. J.W. Aird. To admit patients, other physicians either had to turn them over to Dr. Aird for surgery, or pay him for the privilege of admitting and doing the surgery. The result was that much surgery was performed in offices and many patients went to Salt Lake City for hospital services. Several groups performed all of their surgery in their clinics. Surgery ran the gamut from simple appendectomies to cholecystectomies, hysterectomies, amputations and even Caesarian sections.

Fractures were reduced and placed in traction in the home with makeshift appliances fastened to the ceiling, and plaster casts applied as needed. Nursing care was furnished by the family with daily or twice daily visits from the surgeon. Benefits of early ambulation resulted as patients were probably forced to get out of bed. According to the physicians involved, there were few if any post-operative deaths, no "staph infections", and the patients benefited by early ambulation.

It is interesting to note that many early physi-

cians gravitated to Provo even before it had a modern hospital.

UTAH VALLEY HOSPITAL BUILT

The unsatisfactory situation as regards hospitals in the period 1920 to 1935 led local doctors and the Chamber of Commerce of Provo to seek help from the L.D.S. Church and the Catholic Church for the construction of a hospital but both declined to become involved. About 1935 initial contacts were made with the Commonwealth Fund of New York City, a philanthropic organization which was then promoting a program of providing matching funds to rural communities for the construction of hospitals of about 50 beds.

Meetings were arranged and after considerable negotiation, the Fund finally agreed to assist in the construction of a hospital provided the community would do its share. Provo City donated the original site of about 9 acres; a county-wide drive brought in about \$90,000 from 4000 donors, and this plus the plans and specifications and \$250,000 from the Fund, resulted in the construction in 1938-39 of the original 55 bed Utah Valley Hospital, which opened in September 1939.

ENTIRE COUNTY WAS ORIGINAL HOSPITAL SERVICE AREA

The original concept for the establishment by